United Nations S/2013/119

Security Council

Distr.: General
27 February 2013

Original: English

Special Report of the Secretary-General on the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to the statement by the President of the Security Council adopted on 19 October 2012 (S/PRST/2012/22) and Council resolution 2076 (2012) of 20 November 2012, in which the Council requested me to submit a special report on possible options and their implications for reinforcing the ability of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) to implement its mandate. The report reviews the overall situation and the regional implications of the recent crisis in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and presents recommendations to address the recurring cycles of violence there in a comprehensive and collective regional manner. It proposes a package of actions that are required at the national and the regional levels and makes recommendations on the support to be provided by the international community, including through reinforced political efforts by the United Nations and a strengthened MONUSCO.

II. Evolution of the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

2. Significant progress has been achieved in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the past 10 years. Through a political process, the national territory was reunited, foreign armed forces formally withdrew in accordance with the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement of 1999 and credible national elections in 2006 ended a successful transitional period. This led to the installation of a legitimate Government as well as the creation of space and time in which to consolidate peace and rebuild the country. A second post-transitional national election was held in 2011.

3. The overall economic situation has continued to improve significantly over the past 10 years, with an average economic growth rate of 6.5 per cent per year, a major decrease in inflation, increasing government domestic revenues, effective fiscal deficit control and the cancellation of debt under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative.

4. The western and central parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo have generally stabilized, with the main challenges faced there relating to post-conflict reconstruction and long-term peacebuilding. In the east, in particular Orientale

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Province and the Kivus, efforts to address the threat of armed groups and to extend State authority have resulted in the relative stabilization of most of the Ituri district and the significant degradation of the capacities of foreign armed groups, including the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). In 2009, the Government launched the stabilization and reconstruction plan for war-affected areas aimed at, inter alia, improving security, re-establishing the authority of the State and supporting the return and reintegration of refugees and internally displaced persons and socioeconomic recovery.

5. However, and as exemplified by the current crisis in North Kivu, which started in April 2012, eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo also continues to be plagued by recurrent waves of conflict, chronic humanitarian crises and serious human rights violations, including sexual and gender-based violence. Contributing to the cycles of violence have been the continued presence of Congolese and foreign armed groups taking advantage of power and security vacuums in the eastern part of the country; the illegal exploitation of resources; interference by neighbouring countries; pervasive impunity; intercommunal feuds; and the weak capacity of the national army and police to effectively protect civilians and the national territory and ensure law and order. The weakness of the judiciary and penitentiary systems has also contributed to the state of general instability.

6. The recurrence of such cycles of violence continues to be an obstacle to peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and threatens the overall stability and development of the Great Lakes region. In the past, national, regional and international efforts have for the most part succeeded in addressing the immediate manifestations of crises, but not the core reasons for their eruption. In order to break such cycles and ensure that sustainable peace takes hold in the country and the wider region, a new, comprehensive approach that addresses the underlying causes of conflict is required.

III. Framework for Peace, Security and Cooperation for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region

7. This new, comprehensive approach will involve actions at the national level to address the outstanding tasks of State-building, consolidate democratic institutions for the benefit of the Congolese people and create conditions for sustainable development. It will involve actions at the regional level to address the legitimate concerns and interests of all countries of the Great Lakes region and actions at the international level in support of these initiatives. To this end, and in conjunction with the implementation of the commendable initiatives by the regional and subregional organizations, I have engaged the leaders of the region on an overall Framework for Peace, Security and Cooperation for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region, which outlines key action at the national, regional and international levels required to end the recurring cycles of violence in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo.

8. The Framework, which was signed in Addis Ababa on 24 February, establishes a national oversight mechanism, led by the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Joseph Kabila, to accompany the implementation of actions at the national level. Established within the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, it will be supported by the United Nations, the African Union, the World

Bank, the African Development Bank and other bilateral or multilateral partners of the Democratic Republic of the Congo that are agreed upon. The Framework also establishes a regional oversight mechanism, known as the "11+4" mechanism, involving the leaders of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Congo, Rwanda, South Africa, South Sudan, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia, with the United Nations, the African Union, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) acting as guarantors. The mechanism, which will monitor progress in the implementation of the regional commitments, is expected to meet twice a year at the level of Heads of State on the margins of the General Assembly and at the annual African Union summit. It will also be convened at the ministerial and other levels, as required. I will provide my good offices to accompany the implementation of the Framework in my role as guarantor. It will be supported by and closely linked to ongoing regional efforts by the African Union, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and SADC, as well as those of other international partners, including the European Union, Belgium, France, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America. The detailed plan for the implementation of the Framework will be developed jointly, including the establishment of benchmarks and appropriate follow-up measures.

A. Actions at the national level

9. One underlying reason for the recurring cycles of violence in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo involving Congolese and foreign armed groups is the Government's limited ability to exert full authority over its territory and to provide basic services and security to the population. The Democratic Republic of the Congo continues to face peace consolidation challenges emanating from a serious shortfall in terms of the capacity and lack of accountability of State institutions, in particular the army, the police, the judiciary and the prison service. Limited socioeconomic recovery, corruption and impunity are also major impediments to the extension of State authority. Impunity for human rights violations, including against women and children, is itself a symptom of weak State authority and fuels further conflict. In addition, there are concerns about limited political space and the perceived emerging trend towards the concentration of authority in the executive branch.

10. The lack of progress towards building well-trained and well-equipped armed forces constitutes a major threat to the stability of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. A professional and accountable army is one of the critical pillars for strengthening State authority and achieving stability. In addition to security sector reform, other national actions are required to enable the Government to consolidate its authority. These include governance and structural reforms; economic development; decentralization; and the furtherance of the rule of law, human rights and democratization.

Security sector

11. As I noted in annex II to my report on MONUSCO of 14 November 2012 (S/2012/838), the recent crisis in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo has again underlined the need to reform the security sector, notably the Forces armées

de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC), and to review approaches to dealing with armed groups, including through disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. The Congolese authorities and their partners should also work towards the development of an overall vision for the security sector and the strengthening of the capacity of oversight bodies.

Army reform

12. FARDC suffers from systemic weaknesses, which are compounded by an inadequate budget, as well as insufficient administrative and logistical systems, including weapons and ammunitions management. The fast-tracked integration of unvetted, armed-group elements into FARDC as part of peace settlements signed by the Government has resulted in the destabilization of its command and control structures and undermined its level of conduct and discipline. The continued grave human rights violations committed by some members of FARDC are also emblematic of its lack of professionalism. As a consequence, the operational performance of FARDC has not been that expected of a professional national army.

13. Comprehensive reforms aimed at building a professional army subject to civilian control and capable of carrying out the fundamental task of protecting the integrity of the national territory and its population are critical. Such a process will also require the allocation of the necessary resources and the adoption of key legislation to establish a national security force. A strong oversight and accountability mechanism should also be instituted, with support from the international community.

14. Without the political will and full commitment and ownership of the Government, no meaningful work can be achieved in the area of army reform. There has been some progress in that regard. In statements made on 15 and 31 December 2012, President Kabila indicated that army reform would constitute a major priority for his Government in 2013. In January, the National Assembly adopted an amendment to the Finance Law that increased fund allocations for national security institutions, including FARDC.

15. Under the auspices of the national authorities, strong coordinated international support, including increased resources and technical assistance, will be required to realize comprehensive army reform. Technical assistance will also be required to support the national authorities in identifying the tasks, size and resource requirements of the Congolese national defence force. Modalities for the vetting of FARDC personnel on the basis of merit and human rights records for the Congolese defence force should be included in the plan of action.

16. The structural reform of the national defence force of the Democratic Republic of the Congo will be a long-term undertaking. As a first step, the authorities should be encouraged to establish a well-trained and adequately equipped rapid reaction force of approximately five brigades. The rapid reaction force should be capable of intervening against emerging threats, including ensuring the protection of civilians in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, in close coordination with MONUSCO. The rapid reaction force should form the nucleus of a professional, well-sustained and effective national defence force. Well-coordinated and generous international assistance will be required to establish such a force.

17. MONUSCO stands ready to coordinate international support for enhanced actions on security sector reform, including the possible establishment of a rapid

reaction force. The Mission could also contribute to the training efforts of such a force.

18. As far as wider security sector reform efforts are concerned, it will be important to assist the Congolese authorities in designing a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration plan that offers alternatives for Congolese combatants and dependants, including members of FARDC. In particular, there is a need for a comprehensive approach to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and to disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, reintegration and resettlement, bringing the two formerly distinct processes together as one initiative that addresses Congolese combatants and foreign elements in both Congolese and foreign armed groups. Moreover, traditional disarmament, demobilization and reintegration could be reinforced by preventive, community-based measures such as community violence reduction programmes, including youth employment schemes. The United Nations, drawing on expertise from MONUSCO and the relevant United Nations funds, programmes and agencies, could provide the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo with integrated technical support in the initial stages of planning for the comprehensive approach outlined above.

Extension of State authority

19. The consolidation of State authority through the deployment of police and the establishment of territorial administration, as well as judicial and prison institutions, is essential in laying the foundations for sustainable peace and preventing the recurrence of violence. Despite the progress achieved over the past 10 years, decades of mismanagement and lack of governance have eroded State authority. Provincial authorities generally lack effective capacity, and institutions are under-resourced and underfunded. Judicial and administrative services are weak and the police presence inadequate. This is compounded by extremely poor conditions of service for public officials. Ineffective institutions impair the capacity of the central authorities to govern, levy taxes and uphold the rule of law. Institutions often coexist with local criminal networks and are either unable to impose State authority or, in some cases, become co-opted by private interests.

20. Significant differences in levels of training and expertise remain within the Congolese national police. Some police elements who have been recently integrated from armed groups have not undergone a formal vetting process, and members of the force have on occasion been found guilty of human rights violations, including sexual violence. The police are also constrained by a lack of vehicles, communications systems and related equipment and by a poorly functioning salary disbursement system. Progress in the implementation of the 15-year strategic plan and the three-year action plan aimed at building the capacity of the police, which were adopted in October 2009, would contribute to the restoration of State authority.

21. The long-term capacity-building of the police should continue to be a priority for the national authorities and the international community, and MONUSCO will continue its capacity-building initiatives and specialized training programmes in that regard. In order to avoid recruiting ex-combatants with a history of human rights violations, MONUSCO will also continue to participate in the vetting of newly recruited cadets.

22. Operating on less than 1 per cent of the national budget, the justice sector lacks functioning administrative systems, including in the areas of finance,

personnel, case-tracking, the budget, procurement and asset management. Interference in justice processes by government officials at various levels is common, as is corruption, leading to the prevalence of a state of impunity throughout the country. There are fewer than 1,400 judges and prosecutors, compared with an assessed need of at least 5,000, and only a limited number of jurists, including defence counsel. Military justice institutions continue to face challenges similar to those on the civilian side, including a severe shortage of military judges and prosecutors. The military justice system is also subject to political and command interference, and security arrangements for magistrates in conflict-affected areas are woefully inadequate.

23. The prison system is characterized by inhuman conditions of detention, including lack of medical facilities and severe overcrowding. Very few prisons have an allocated budget for operational costs, and detainees regularly face malnutrition and lack of health services. Security installations are rudimentary, contributing to high rates of escape. Some 95 per cent of personnel working in correctional facilities are self-appointed and there is no training institution for prison personnel. No formal or practical coordination exists among the Ministries of Justice and Human Rights, Defence and the Interior, which are together responsible for the corrections sector. Of approximately 18,000 inmates in correctional facilities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, at least 70 per cent are held in pretrial detention. Only one military prison is currently operational. MONUSCO and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) will continue to work closely with the Government to finalize a joint initiative aimed at addressing the penitentiary situation and establish a minimum level of sustainable State authority and control in the conflict-affected areas in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo through the deployment of trained and equipped police and judicial and corrections officials. The United Nations will also continue to ensure compliance with prison system standards and practices and assist the national authorities with the development of mechanisms designed to combat illegal and prolonged detention and improve prison conditions.

Governance and structural reforms

24. International independent indicators have persistently ranked the Democratic Republic of the Congo as one of the most corrupt countries in the world. The detrimental consequences are far-reaching. Widespread corruption, combined with weak, non-transparent, and poorly coordinated revenue collection systems, as well as poor salary and other State disbursement systems, have impeded the capacity of the Government to carry out its obligations. Limited basic social services, such as the provision of health care, water and education, combined with the lack of job opportunities, have delayed the return to stability and peace in parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. While the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other programmes have made significant progress in those areas in recent years, much remains to be done.

25. The combination of a porous and opaque public finance system with deficient judicial contract enforcement mechanisms and the lack of functioning financial oversight bodies continues to discourage legitimate foreign investors and local entrepreneurs. As a result, national and provincial budgets remain underfunded when compared with the potential wealth and size of the country. This has an important impact on infrastructure development and basic service delivery. UNDP will continue to strengthen the capacities of provinces to formulate their growth and

poverty reduction strategies and support the mobilization of partners around provincial priority action plans. In addition, it will continue to support the reform of public finances through the restructuring of tax-collection services, as well as the reorganization of the local fiscal system and the chain of local expenditures.

26. With the support of international partners, the Government should consider launching a large-scale capacity-building and training initiative for senior and other State employees, who could later impart best practices in management and promote good governance among the lower-level cadres in a sustainable manner. In support of this, and as a first step, the Government could consider, in close coordination with other national stakeholders, strategies that include the creation of joint national/international advisory teams or the embedding of international experts in key ministries.

Economic and human development

27. The Government's efforts in the area of economic development since the transitional period in 2003 have led to a stable macroeconomic framework; real gross domestic product (GDP) growth rates of over 6 per cent during the past decade, reversing decades of declining GDP; and inflation rates brought down to single-digit levels. Revenue collection has produced increases in State revenues both in absolute terms and in terms of percentage of GDP (from 16 per cent in 2009 to more than 20 per cent projected in 2013). The country's 90 per cent foreign debt relief of $10 billion in 2011 was also a positive development. The very low base, however, from which these programmes started means that overall revenues available to national and provincial governments, even including foreign budgetary support, remain highly inadequate to address a wide variety of urgent requirements. A continuing lack of transparency in the management of the extractive sector, and more generally in State-run enterprises, also remains a significant impediment to further gains in investment and economic development and related potential budget revenue growth.

28. Despite improved macroeconomic performance, 71 per cent of the population still live in extreme poverty, and access to basic services remains limited. The Democratic Republic of the Congo was ranked the lowest of 187 countries on the UNDP human development index in 2011, and the country is not expected to reach any of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. On 10 December 2012, IMF ended its economic programme with the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as the country had not complied with its structural benchmark on governance and transparency in the mining sector, and withheld the payment of the remaining $240 million of a three-year $500 million loan agreement.

29. Furthermore, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has not been able to reap the benefits of the exploitation of its natural resources. The effective management of that sector still faces the challenge of massive illegal exploitation, facilitated by corruption and the presence of armed groups. International assistance can add value only if a number of challenges are addressed by the authorities, including: (a) inconsistent sectoral policies; (b) the need for reforms of the public administration to enable it to better track and manage natural resources; (c) the limited capacity of the national agencies responsible for environmental monitoring and fighting corruption, resulting in a lack of transparency in the management of mineral resources

and a culture of non-accountability; and (d) the limited capacity of the Government to negotiate and manage mining and natural resource exploitation contracts.

30. The Government's 2012-2016 programme, adopted in May 2012, envisages an increase in the annual GDP growth rate from 5 to 7 per cent and a reduction in inflation to 4 per cent. It also envisages a boost in electricity production and agricultural output and an increase in the output of the mining sector, and foresees important reforms in a number of areas, including the payments system and the banking and financing system, as well as the reorganization of public enterprises. The programme provides a sound road map for the economic reforms that are required. However, four factors are essential to its success. The first factor is to ensure the necessary political will to accord its implementation the necessary priority. The second is to ensure that the resources required for its implementation are available, including the necessary technical capacities and expertise. The third is to ensure accountability at the national and local levels. The factor is strong support from the international community, including from the relevant financial institutions. As with the recent decision of the Government and Parliament to allocate increased funding to the defence sector, other areas of national budget allocations should be increased. The United Nations will support the Government's programme through the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (2013-2017), which focuses on governance and institution-building; inclusive growth and job creation; basic social services and human capital development; natural resources and climate change; and stabilization and peace consolidation within the framework provided by the international security, stabilization and support strategy devised to support the Government's stabilization and reconstruction plan for war-affected areas.

Decentralization

31. Decentralization and the establishment of legitimate and effective provincial and local institutions are an important means of addressing many of the root causes of conflict at the local level and enabling the integration of minority groups. Decentralization also allows for the equitable and more effective distribution of basic services to local populations.

32. The Constitution provides a framework for decentralization. However, limited progress has been achieved, in part owing to such complex internal political challenges as weak political and social ownership of the process, delays in establishing the framework for implementation, lack of consensus in Parliament on the options for territorial division, insufficient financing and conflicting pressures from various constituencies.

33. The Government's commitment to moving forward with the adoption of the remaining legislation on decentralization will be critical. Progress was made in 2012, when 7 of 14 key laws were passed and local financial tools developed with the aim of creating a functioning system of decentralization, with a view to reforming the sharing of revenues between the provinces and the capital. UNDP will continue to support the operationalization of the provincial and local public finance management platforms, which has improved revenue and expenditure tracking as well as the capacity of provincial and local authorities to mobilize their own resources. The decentralization process must continue to be carefully managed to avoid exacerbating existing ethnic, land, traditional rule hierarchy and other

tensions, and the related prospect of increased localized violence in various parts of the country.

Democratization and human rights

34. A solid foundation for stability and economic reconstruction and development lies in a functional, democratic system. Such a system ensures the peaceful transition of power through credible and peaceful electoral processes; establishes guarantees and clear checks and balances between the branches of Government; and opens space for the active participation of civil society and independent media. National opposition actors and other observers have protested that the Government has taken systematic steps to consolidate its power, restrict political space and intimidate and target opponents, whether from political parties or civil society. United Nations agencies will continue their efforts to further the democratization process, including in support of the expansion of political space for all political parties and civil society.

35. As highlighted by a number of national and international observer groups, the presidential and legislative elections of November 2011 were marred by irregularities, with the results contested by a number of national actors. It is essential that the Government continue to honour its commitment to take active steps to advance the democratization process in this critical and fragile period for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in accordance with core constitutional principles. Active and meaningful steps to investigate and prosecute those responsible for the human rights violations committed in the context of the 2011 elections and respect for fundamental civil rights and liberties are critical.

36. The timely completion of the provincial elections, originally scheduled for March 2012, followed by local elections planned since 2007, will be a major factor in consolidating the democratic process by concluding the current electoral cycle. If this is to be achieved, the installation of a new, credible independent National Electoral Commission which is equipped with the necessary technical expertise and commands the confidence and respect of national political actors will be necessary and will encourage international donors to resume their assistance. An important step forward was made with the adoption by Parliament, on 14 January of the revised Organic Law on the Independent National Electoral Commission. The new text includes civil society representation and enhanced gender representation within the managerial structure of the institution. The timely promulgation and implementation of the revised Organic Law, notably to include the establishment of the new Commission, will lead to the resumption of the electoral process.

37. With regard to human rights, advances in the structural and legislative reforms that are essential to improve the human rights situation have remained slow, and Government efforts to establish the necessary institutions to protect and promote human rights throughout the country remain limited. The adoption by Parliament of the draft organic law establishing the National Human Rights Commission is a step forward, but the law has yet to be promulgated by the President. Limited progress has also been made with regard to the establishment of transitional justice mechanisms.

38. Human rights violations continue to be widespread, and impunity remains pervasive throughout the country. Grave violations against children, including the use of child soldiers, have been widespread in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Advances in the structural and legislative reforms that are essential to

improving the human rights situation have remained slow, and Government efforts to establish the necessary institutions to protect and promote human rights throughout the country remain limited. Progress towards the establishment of transitional justice mechanisms has also been limited.

39. Long-term stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo cannot be achieved without addressing these and other human rights violations, in terms of both prevention and accountability and assistance to victims. The signature by the Government on 5 October 2012 of an action plan to end the recruitment and use of child soldiers and sexual violence against children by FARDC, in line with Security Council resolutions 1612 (2005) and 1882 (2009), is an important step towards mitigating violations.

Humanitarian activities

40. Thanks to donor support, extensive humanitarian operations have contributed to saving lives and reducing human suffering for millions of people throughout the Democratic Republic of the Congo during the past years. However, the country continues to face recurrent humanitarian challenges. The number of internally displaced persons had risen to more than 2.6 million by mid-December 2012, from 1.8 million at the beginning of 2012. In North Kivu alone there have been 500,000 new displacements since April 2012. In the context of recurrent conflict and violence in the country, the protection of civilians has remained a major humanitarian concern. Contamination with unexploded ordnance continues to pose a significant threat to the local population. The ongoing need for clearance and risk-education activities in areas affected by unexploded ordnance remains a high priority. There is also an opportunity for the Government to assume greater responsibility for delivering protection and assistance to internally displaced persons in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo through the enactment of legislation on displacement.

41. Some 6.3 million people are affected by food insecurity, while diseases, including malaria, cholera and measles, threaten millions of people. Malnutrition, which is especially endemic in less conflict-affected provinces such as the Kasaïs and Bas-Congo, is blamed for 35 per cent of deaths among children under 5 years of age, some 2.5 million of whom are affected by acute malnutrition. Access to improved water and sanitation remains limited for the vast majority of the Congolese people.

42. There is a need for the Government and international partners to strengthen linkages between humanitarian and development efforts to help build community resilience further so that people can better cope with increased vulnerability and shocks. Donor willingness to invest in resilience and development activities would also help to enhance the impact and cost effectiveness of assistance in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. To this end, the United Nations will provide assistance to foster community dialogue for peace consolidation, and support reintegration and recovery with a view to building social cohesion among the population. This will cover community development activities through the provision of basic social services, and the building of economic infrastructure. In this context, it is proposed that the United Nations also support the establishment of a Democratic Republic of the Congo-led "platform for dialogue" between the Government and humanitarian and development donors to help strengthen strategic coordination of the various financing mechanisms for humanitarian, stabilization and development assistance. Such a platform would help the Government and its

partners to move from a sequential to a more simultaneous and comprehensive response to humanitarian and development challenges in the country.

B. Actions at the regional level

43. Since the conclusion of the Lusaka Agreement in 1999, there have been numerous bilateral, regional and international initiatives aimed at restoring stability to the Great Lakes region. These initiatives have been successful in addressing various aspects of the problem, including reunifying the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and reducing the threat of such foreign armed groups as FDLR and LRA. The International Conference on the Great Lakes Region process, including the conclusion in 2006 of the milestone Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region, has in some respects contributed to addressing the political, security and economic dimensions of the conflict. The Conference remains a key partner to date.

44. The important progress achieved has not, however, succeeded in ending the recurring cycles of violence that have beset eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. In addition to the actions at the national level outlined in section A above, a number of collective actions at the regional level are required. Such actions should tackle the regional drivers of recurring violence and address, in a comprehensive manner, the legitimate concerns and interests of all of the neighbours of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Non-interference

45. An essential first step is the strong reaffirmation of the commitments made by the countries of the Great Lakes region not to interfere in the internal affairs of neighbouring countries. The Framework for Peace, Security and Cooperation for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region offers a full commitment not to interfere in the internal affairs of neighbouring countries; to neither tolerate nor provide assistance or support of any kind to armed groups; to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of neighbouring countries; to respect the legitimate concerns and interests of neighbouring countries, in particular regarding security matters; to neither harbour nor provide protection of any kind to persons accused of war crimes, crimes against humanity, acts of genocide or crimes of aggression, or persons falling under the United Nations sanctions regime; and to facilitate the administration of justice through judicial cooperation within the region. Countries of the region should also commit themselves to prosecuting, extraditing or handing over those individuals to the International Criminal Court, as applicable.

46. Given the multiplicity of occasions on which the countries of the Great Lakes region have committed themselves to these principles in the past, it is essential that the process be accompanied by concrete steps and confidence-building measures that are workable and acceptable to all States of the region with support from the international community. Any viable long-term solution must take into consideration the legitimate national interests of all countries in the Great Lakes region. A comprehensive strategy to neutralize the threats posed by Congolese and foreign armed groups operating in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo would be a central component of this process, including reinsertion and reintegration packages for returning former combatants and their dependants.

Addressing the threat posed by armed groups

47. Thriving in the security vacuum created by the absence of effective State authority in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, armed groups continue to constitute the main threat to the security of the population and the general stability of the region and an obstacle to regional cohesion. The continuing military deployments of the Mouvement du 23 Mars (M23), occupying the heights immediately overlooking the town of Goma and threatening it, underscore this threat. In addition to M23, the various Mayi-Mayi groups and other Congolese armed groups, the main foreign armed groups include FDLR, the Allied Democratic Forces and National Liberation Army of Uganda (ADF/NALU), LRA and the Forces nationales de libération (FNL).

48. As a first essential step in stabilizing eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, a comprehensive strategy to address armed groups should be developed using military and non-military means. All armed groups, whether Congolese or foreign, have also engaged in the illegal exploitation of the vast mineral and other natural resources of eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as other criminal activities. For those groups, the benefits derived from the illegal exploitation of those resources not only finance their acquisition of illicit weapons, but have also become an end in themselves.

49. States of the region should strengthen their cooperation to effectively end illicit cross-border trafficking in natural resources and weapons and put in place effective security and border control measures. Promoting viable regional arrangements that allow for stronger economic integration would contribute to that effort.

50. In addition, strengthening border surveillance and agreeing on an effective verification mechanism would significantly curtail the support that armed groups receive from individuals or entities from neighbouring countries. The provision of ongoing support to armed groups by neighbouring countries continues to be a source of serious instability and should have tangible consequences for perpetrators.

51. The putting in place of alternative options for those members of armed groups who are not suspected of crimes against humanity, war crimes or genocide would be another important aspect of the strategy to neutralize the threat of armed groups. Such options could include effective demobilization packages as well as opportunities for social and political reintegration into their countries of origin. This would require the support and active participation of the international community.

52. Finally, until the Government can assemble a capable Congolese defence force, such a strategy will require, in addition to the measures outlined above, a military enforcement capability designed to neutralize the threat posed by the most recalcitrant elements of the armed groups. Proposals in that regard are presented in paragraphs 60 to 64 below.

Deepening regional economic integration

53. To ensure the long-term stability of the Great Lakes region, the countries of the region need to enhance regional cooperation, in particular by deepening economic integration to meet the aspirations of their people.

54. States of the region should consider increasing joint initiatives aimed at promoting such regional integration and development projects as joint regional

infrastructure for energy, transport and communications and strengthening multisectoral cooperation and activities aimed at border communities. Partnerships, including private sector investment, are essential to finance heavy infrastructure projects, such as the rehabilitation of the Inga I and II dams and the construction of railways for different regional corridors as planned by the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). Interventions aimed at reducing inefficiencies and costs in connection with trade at the borders are also essential, taking into account issues related to informal cross-border trade. Moreover, an improved regulatory framework through the establishment of a regional cross-border trade facilitation unit under NEPAD and the Lagos Plan of Action for the Economic Development of Africa to oversee implementation of a cross-border trade strategy should be considered. The commitment made by the signatories of the Framework for Peace, Security and Cooperation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region, to strengthen regional cooperation, including deepening economic integration with special consideration for the exploitation of natural resources, is an important step in that direction.

C. Actions at the international level

55. The Democratic Republic of the Congo and the States of the Great Lakes region bear the primary responsibility for the proposed actions outlined above. At the same time, the actions described in the present report will require a renewed commitment by the international community to enhance its investment in the restoration of lasting peace in the region.

56. The international community's strong and coordinated support for the restoration of peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region is essential to the success of the new, comprehensive approach set out in the present report. The Framework for Peace, Security and Cooperation for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region provides a common platform for the provision of such coordinated support.

57. To accompany the national and regional actions, I have decided to appoint a Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, who will work closely with the Governments of the region to reach agreements and establish mechanisms to guarantee non-interference in the internal affairs of the neighbouring States. The Special Envoy will help them to agree on ways to neutralize the threat of the various armed groups operating in the Great Lakes region on the basis of the approach described in paragraphs 47 to 52 above. He or she will foster new agreements among countries in the region and revitalize the implementation of existing accords that promote regional economic integration and the free movement of goods and people. He or she will also mobilize resources and support for those initiatives and assist with the strategic coordination of international support and various funding streams in the region for stabilization, development, humanitarian and peacekeeping activities. My Special Envoy will also have a key role to play in mobilizing public interest and international support for the Great Lakes region.

58. My Special Envoy will liaise closely with the regional and subregional organizations, including the African Union, SADC, the Economic Community of Central African States and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region. Recognizing the complexities and chronic nature of the problems facing the Great

Lakes region, I propose that the mandate of my Special Envoy should be established for an initial renewable period of one year. The Special Envoy would be supported by a small office comprising relevant experts.

59. The reforms to be undertaken in the Democratic Republic of the Congo at the national level will require strong, coordinated and sophisticated international support, including expertise and resources. My Special Representative for the Democratic Republic of the Congo will continue to promote and facilitate inclusive and transparent political dialogue among all stakeholders concerned. This will contribute to the creation of an environment conducive to the implementation of the national commitments included in the Framework. Security sector reform and addressing the threat posed by armed groups will be critical areas of priority for the Mission.

IV. Intervention brigade

60. In support of the objectives of the Framework for Peace, Security and Cooperation for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region, and following consultation with the African Union, SADC and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, which had initially conceived the idea of the deployment of a peace-enforcement force to address the threat posed by armed groups, it is proposed that a dedicated intervention brigade be established within MONUSCO for an initial period of one year. Under the direct operational command of the MONUSCO Force Commander and operating alongside other MONUSCO brigades in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, the intervention brigade would have the peace-enforcement tasks of preventing the expansion of, neutralizing and disarming armed groups, to be carried out together with disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, reintegration and resettlement efforts. The activities of the intervention brigade would be aimed at creating an environment conducive to the restoration of State authority and the achievement of sustainable stability. The brigade would also contribute towards creating the space and time for a strengthened FARDC to undertake its primary responsibility.

61. The intervention brigade would carry out targeted offensive operations, either on its own or jointly with FARDC, in a robust, highly mobile and versatile manner. It would rely on the Mission's air and other support assets to carry out its tasks, including an additional two attack helicopters and four utility helicopters, as requested in my letter to the Security Council dated 27 December 2012 (S/2013/43), and budgetary support. Additional capabilities would be acquired for advanced information collation, analysis and dissemination to enhance situational awareness and enable timely decision-making. This would be provided by the upcoming deployment of unmanned aerial systems, of which the Council took note on 22 January (see S/2013/44).

62. It is proposed that the intervention brigade be composed of three infantry battalions, enabling units and force multipliers. This would entail the generation of two new infantry battalions and the reassignment of one infantry battalion already deployed in MONUSCO. An artillery battery, a special forces company, a signals unit and support components would form the remainder of the brigade. The brigade would be deployed within the Mission's current authorized strength.

63. The deployment of the intervention brigade would be preceded by predeployment training in the areas of human rights, the protection of civilians and gender. The operations of the brigade would be conducted in strict compliance with international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law. Past experience with military operations against armed groups in North and South Kivu has shown that civilians often flee their homes in a preventive manner ahead of such operations, while armed groups tend to regroup and return after the operations to commit violent reprisal acts against civilians. To mitigate this, MONUSCO will incorporate enhanced mechanisms for the protection of civilians. These will include a strengthened assessment of the impact of offensive operations, measures to mitigate harm to civilians before, during and after operations, and accountability for any violations. This will build upon the ongoing review of existing strategies and best practices for the protection of civilians.

64. As part of the overall coordination efforts with regional partners, regular updates will be provided to military representatives from troop-contributing countries and the region on the activities of the intervention brigade.

V. New approach to the role of the Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

65. The United Nations peacekeeping operation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has evolved since 1999, progressively assuming more responsibilities and tasks to meet the requirements of an evolving situation. Recognizing that the wider United Nations presence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo will continue to be engaged for a considerably longer period to help address the country's peace consolidation, recovery and reconstruction challenges, the Mission's activities should be focused on achieving key strategic objectives that help establish solid foundations for peace without the risk of a major relapse into instability and conflict.

66. In line with the commitments outlined in the Framework for Peace, Security and Cooperation for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region, an end-state that would enable MONUSCO to successfully complete its peacekeeping mandate would be the reduction of armed conflict, violence against civilians and sexual violence to a level that can be effectively managed by national security and justice institutions; stabilization through the establishment of functional State institutions in conflict-affected and mining areas; and a functioning democratic order that reduces the risk of instability, including adequate political space, observance of human rights and credible elections on a regular basis.

67. While closely monitoring developments in the western part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and in addition to supporting the implementation of the national commitments included in the Framework, it is proposed that MONUSCO prioritize and streamline its activities in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo in the forthcoming period with the aim of contributing to the realization of the following six key objectives: (a) the promotion and facilitation of inclusive and transparent political dialogue among all stakeholders with a view to furthering reconciliation and democratization; (b) the successful completion of military operations against foreign and Congolese armed groups and the reduction of the threat that they pose to a level that can be managed by national security authorities, in strict compliance with international humanitarian human rights and refugee law

and the human rights due diligence policy on United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces; (c) the disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, reintegration and resettlement of foreign armed groups, and the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of Congolese combatants, including the demobilization and reintegration of some elements within FARDC, and the start of a viable community-based reintegration process for former combatants; (d) the establishment of a minimum level of sustainable State authority and control in the conflict-affected areas in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, most critically through the deployment of trained and equipped police and judicial and corrections officials, on the basis of a national vision and strategies for the security and justice sectors; (e) support for the establishment of an effective national civilian structure to control key mining activities and manage in an equitable manner the extraction and trade of natural resources in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo; and (f) the creation of a well-sustained, equipped, trained and vetted national rapid reaction force, within the broader objective of security sector reform, adequately trained in international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law, and incorporating effective mechanisms to ensure the protection of civilians in all of its operations, which would eventually have the capability of assuming security responsibilities from MONUSCO.

68. The mandate of MONUSCO should be reviewed to reflect the six key priorities outlined above. A review of the Mission's activities could also be undertaken in the near future to further focus them and ensure complementarity of efforts with other key partners. In the meantime, my Special Representative's good offices role should also be strengthened to facilitate the implementation of the national commitments included in the Framework. In addition, and in accordance with paragraph 28 of resolution 2053 (2012), my previous report on the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2013/96) outlined the strategy and efforts made to effectively transfer responsibility of some MONUSCO tasks to members of the United Nations country team.

VI. Observations

69. While progress has been achieved over the past 14 years in the promotion of stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the crisis brought about by the M23 rebellion has underscored the continued fragility of the situation in the eastern part of the country, highlighted the similarities with past crises instigated by previous rebellions and demonstrated that the underlying causes of continued instability in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo have yet to be adequately addressed.

70. I am convinced that the situation today offers an opportunity to collectively address the underlying causes of the conflict in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region and to break the pattern of recurring cycles of violence. I call on all stakeholders to honour their commitments as outlined in the Framework for Peace, Security and Cooperation for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region and to work closely and in good faith with my Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region. I also intend to remain closely engaged with the process.

71. I take note of the commitment made by President Kabila to implement key national reforms. Political will and strong leadership will be required to enable the Government to consolidate its authority, in particular in eastern Democratic

Republic of the Congo. My Special Representative for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and MONUSCO will play a central role in ensuring that the national commitments made by President Kabila in the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region are implemented in good faith.

72. I recognize that the legitimate concerns and interests of all neighbouring States must be taken into account as part of any lasting political settlement in the Great Lakes region. In this regard, I wish to reiterate that the provision of external support to any of the armed groups operating in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo is an unacceptable violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo that severely undermines the overall stability of the region as whole.

73. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the African Union, SADC and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region for their initiatives to help resolve the crisis. Their ongoing efforts are a testimony to the important role that regional mechanisms are playing in mitigating conflict in the region.

74. The international community has made a significant investment in the stability of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region. It must continue to play a constructive role through enhanced coordination. The reforms that the Government needs to undertake are complex and will require political will and strong leadership as well as generous financial and technical assistance from international partners.

75. The implementation of the Framework will require sustained political, technical and financial support from international stakeholders, in particular those most closely involved in the oversight mechanisms. Together with the leaders of the region, my Special Envoy will review progress on a regular basis and suggest concrete steps to advance the implementation of the Framework. I call on the international community to play its part in ensuring that the Framework translates into tangible actions that address the root causes of instability in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region. I intend to report to the Council on a regular basis on progress made in the implementation of the Framework and will call on the international community to act swiftly and decisively in the face of any violation by States of the Great Lakes region of their regional commitments.

76. I welcome the general consensus among regional actors to support the establishment of an intervention brigade within MONUSCO. Recognizing that there is no military solution to the problems plaguing the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region, this additional capacity within MONUSCO should be viewed as an instrument, alongside non-military means, in support of the political process guided by the principles of the Framework. In this context, the intervention brigade should have a clear exit strategy that recognizes that FARDC has the primary responsibility for safeguarding the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

77. The strengthened United Nations role and involvement will be largely predicated on continued support by major donors, who would work closely with all signatories to the Framework in the implementation of the national and regional commitments. My Special Envoy will remain in close contact with them in order to keep them abreast of progress made and remaining challenges in the implementation.

78. I would like to take this opportunity to thank my senior advisers, troop- and police-contributing countries, the United Nations country team and those who have contributed to the new approach being proposed, for their dedication to their work, often in challenging conditions.